



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

APPRECIATION (EIN TIEFERES SICH BESINNEN)<sup>1</sup>

---

By HERMANN ALMSTEDT

---

THE purpose of this group, I take it, is to meet for the discussion of teaching problems, to present the various experiences along the lines of our various endeavors, to give and to receive quickening. It is in this spirit that my offering is made, and if it leads to large and wholesome discussion, I shall be glad, indeed.

One wonders sometimes in view of the many meetings from time immemorial to discuss the problems of the teacher of Modern Languages: Is there any problem left to be discussed? But supposing for the moment that all questions pertaining to our field were satisfactorily answered, there yet remains always the question: "How can I best make use of this or that principle under the present circumstances?" for the dynamic forces of life are unceasingly creative, working out the pattern and the design of the present hour. Whatever counted yesterday, needs revision today; old theories and facts are questioned and restated; new emphases, new angles of approach are re-shaping and re-evaluating what we had supposed were fixt and unbending verities. This is so in our political and economic life; it is equally true for our academic world. In the latter, if anywhere, should the untrammelled thought and spirit of man find its greatest play-ground, and there are hopeful signs that time-honored incrustations are crumbling, that a new fresh breath of air is sweeping through our corridors and lecture-rooms and is again giving that contact with life as a whole, without whose creative impulsion only sterility and crystallization can result.

There need, therefore, be no misgivings with regard to at least one problem with which the teacher of Modern Languages is concerned, and that problem relates to literature; for Literature is Life itself.

My paper, then, has to do with the general problem of teaching literature; that is, literature in terms of literary masterpieces; that is, literature sensed and evaluated as art, as a creative process of the highest order. German Literature, of course, shares the

<sup>1</sup> Paper read at the meeting of the Modern Language Association, Central Division, held at Iowa City, Iowa, December 29, 1921.

findings of this discussion; but, specifically it is German Lyric Poetry, as the subtlest expression of human emotion in literary form, to the teaching of which I would invite your attention.

When I thus single out lyric poetry from the other traditional categories of dramatic and epic, I wish to make it clear that if you have successfully, as a teacher, created an understanding, and what is more—a love and even a passion for this subtlest species of literary form, you have in the largest way quickened the sense of appreciation for literature as a whole.

If the word inwardness (*Innerlichkeit*) can be characteristically applied to German Literature as distinguished from other literatures, certainly this word receives a more potential meaning when applied to German *Lyric* Poetry. For the teacher, it is a rich and fine opportunity to test his greatest skill and his love and devotion to his subject.

But, comes the retort: Can you *teach* literature? There are those, you know, in our academic family who frankly say that literature can not be taught and should not in our curricula share the same position of eminence with subjects that are supported and vouched for by a body of definite facts and scientific laws; that literature as a creative art lacks that compelling demonstrableness which is the grace and virtue of science and gives to the word academic its true and noble meaning; in a word, that literature is not an academic, or a University subject.

Whatever may be the merit of their position as it relates to the definition of the word academic, so much is clear that they sense the true and inward meaning of a literary fact as distinguished from a scientific fact and thus contribute vitally to a clearer understanding of the function of literary study.

Let us equally frankly admit that there is a difference, and thank God for that difference. The contention of an exclusive *raison d'être* of the one or the other strikes one always as such an unintelligent view of life, as unintelligent and spiritually haughty as the old and ancient theological claims of possessing *die allein wahre und seligmachende Lehre*. Why interpret the world of Mind so sparingly? We need its total functioning to give us Truth: with the pure Intellect as evidenced in our science; with emotion, taste, Beauty as yielding our works of art; with Conscience for our moral sense of obligation and duty—*nun, man kommt wohl eine Strecke!*

In view of the above contention let not the teacher of literature be unduly alarmed, for courses in literature are still in our curricula and there is no likelihood that his field of interest will be taken from him. Further, he can stoutly maintain that there is a body of scientific fact for his subject, only with this restriction, however, that by nature of his subject it covers the ground less satisfactorily than a body of scientific fact relating to a so-called science. But, what body of scientific fact or statement covers the ground completely and satisfactorily? Is not the history of science one continuous sheet of corrections, emendations and amendings? It seems then that the difference between science and art as it relates to the statement of scientific fact is in reality only one of *degree*.

What matters for our discussion at the present moment is the difference in *kind*. There lies the real intent and purpose of my paper. I wish to make it clear that lyric poetry is not physics and that the problems of the teacher of the drama are different from the problems of the teacher of chemistry; that, if this point of difference is really understood, the subject of literature will come into its own more distinctively than it does today. The raw material of fact as such is necessary, but it is a far cry from this to the finished work of art with all of its subtle meanings and implications. We are interested in the material which the artist uses, but we are more concerned with what he fashions out of it as embodying his intention. We are interested supremely in *why* he fashioned it. There lies the fine problem for the teacher: to relate the intentions of the artist to his finished achievement, to interpret; in a word, to *re-create*.

The teacher of literature differs in his function in no way from the conductor of a symphony orchestra, or from any musician who interprets the masterpieces of the great composers. In fact, in more ways than one, may a teacher of literature derive understanding and inspiration for his work from this related field of art—that of music. Let me say so in a word: a teacher needs not only to know, but also to appreciate and to love. This applies to the teacher in any field of interest; above all, however, to the teacher who has masterpieces of literature to interpret. True teaching, in its last analysis, is the finest of fine arts, and it is made of the stuff that a broad and inspiring personality is made of. Ah, there we

have it: *personality, Persönlichkeit!* May a word from Goethe's *Gesprächen* reassure you: "Allerdings ist in der Kunst und Poesie die Persönlichkeit alles . . . aber freilich, um eine grosse Persönlichkeit zu *empfinden* und zu ehren, muss man auch wiederum *selber* etwas sein."

How intangible, how vague, how indefinite all this sounds to the vocationalist whose slogan is efficiency, material efficiency; whose reach never exceeds his grasp, "eager for quick returns of profit, but heedless of far gain"; whose immediate interest is a job, not life itself. I am aware of objections even from brothers in our own field who would view with suspicion, if not with distrust and condemnation, any attempt to do more than purvey the concrete traditional heap of fact. They would probably indict for shallow impressionism and superficial appreciation any one who had the courage of a *quam pulchre*. Well, it is for these, that my superscription bears the qualifying amplification: *Ein tieferes sich Besinnen*. *Sich besinnen* includes the total functioning of the mind, thinking as well as feeling; it calls for nice balancing of values; it re-inforces and rehabilitates at par a coin which has lost by abrasion, and this coin is the word *appreciation*. Let us not discard the word appreciation, but let us give its etymological meaning a new life. To *appreciate* life is, really, to give a value to it, and what word is there that so truly synthesizes all our endeavor, all our aspirations and all our hopes as the word *value*?

For all this, I am in the last analysis indebted to the inspiring essays of Rudolf Hildebrand, who came into my student and pedagogic life quite early. He possessed the searching mind of a scholar and with it the sympathetic heart of a lover. From him as from no other I gained an understanding and an inspiration for courses in literature for undergraduates. As you know yourselves, the work one is called upon to do in our smaller departments ranges all the way from elementary language courses to those of graduate character. The undergraduate problem, however, looms large in this whole field. To open the Gates of Beauty to the Sophomore or Junior is indeed a fine privilege.

With your kind indulgence may I sketch briefly a course called *Masterpieces in Modern German Drama, Lyrics and Novel*. The prerequisite for this course is fifteen hours of work in the elementary, intermediate and advanced language courses. *Masterpieces*

meets three times a week for a semester and aims to open the field of German Literature for the student. There is little or none of the ordinary class-room translating from German into English. The discussion which is largely around literary values is in English. The *specific* aim of the course is to make a lyric poem, a drama, and a novel stand out clearly before the student's mind; the *general* aim—to make him sense and appreciate a literary value. As suggested above, the course is frankly pitched from the start in the key of a lyric poem. A poem from Goethe, like *Der Fischer*, or *Mignon* receives the fullest treatment. If six hours or more are necessary to bring out all the issues, this time is taken. Here we gain time by apparently losing it. The presentation includes three steps: a presentation of the poem as a whole; a close and sympathetic analysis; and a complete synthesis which usually flowers in an oral interpretation. By the time that the end of this preliminary, introductory work is reached, the student has had his eyes opened for the points of value that he is to seek for. He has sampled under the direction, guidance and sympathy of the teacher; he has studied under supervision. He is now ready to strike out for himself and test his own initiative and powers. Each student is then given a poem for the semester paper, on which he begins at once; it becomes his companion for the semester. A brief summary of suggestions (and this summary is merely suggestive) sends him on his way. He is at liberty to come in for conference and to present questions and difficulties as they arise.

The summary of suggestions runs somewhat like this:

Study the poem for content and form. Read among other essays Poe's "Essay on Composition." Give a short biography of the poet and relate your poem to the poet's life. Give content of the poem in a short German essay. Make a sharp, close analysis of your poem from all points of view, even diagramming rise of action or rise of emotion. Is there an abstract idea or theme? Is the latter treated anywhere else in literature? Atmosphere? Unity? How produced? Are content and form in harmony? Beauties, where and why? Meter, describe in detail. How does it characterize, contribute? Heading of poem. Finally: interpret poem orally. Study pronunciation. Write out phonetic transcription. Read poem over intensively every day. In the paper that you hand in, give a table of contents, bibliography, and—last, but not least—write in good literary English.

You will notice that the procedure makes for deepening, for *ein tieferes sich Besinnen*. For once, at least, in their life as young American students they will have become impressed with the idea of sinking a shaft, of growing a responsible conscience even on matters relating to lyric poetry. The returns from this procedure are, in my experience, most gratifying. Students remain to pray, who scoffed before.

You will also observe that the teacher's task is not an easy one, constantly to steer between the Scylla of demonstrable fact and the Charybdis of emotional value. There may be ship-wreck on either of these reefs.

So much stands out clearly in my mind: just as the teacher of the language should have understanding and sympathy for philological endeavors, so the teacher (or rather let us call him the *quickener*) in literary values, should be interested in the questions of the Beautiful, in esthetics. Neither of them, however, should unload his theories as such upon the student already bewildered by the new field of work. The complete history of criticism, or the final work in esthetics has not yet been written; and there will not be a final solution till we have a book called the *Science of Human Behavior*. Let us keep abreast of the endeavors of the human mind to search out finalities, but in the meantime, let the Beautiful in Life not escape us because we have not a theory, or a pigeon-hole for it. Is it not an historic fact that the *aperçus* of one Friedrich Theodor Vischer are valued today, while his theories have long gone a-glimmering? And then, too, think of that glorious line in the Prolog:

"Ihr Anblick gibt den Engeln Stärke,  
Wenn keiner sie ergründen mag."

But—returning to *Masterpieces*—each student has been assigned a poem—all his own—and also a date near the end of the semester on which he is to render an account before the class of the talent entrusted to him. In the meantime, the class-work goes on. One drama is worked through together, one novel is taken up. Sometimes the novel is assigned for outside reading and study in order to gain more time for additional work in lyrics. It is surprising how swiftly the hours go by. When the time comes for the consideration of the individual poems assigned, the class prepares the particular poem and a lively interest results on the day of presentation.

May I say that the class manners are as easy and unforced as possible. I encourage a full play of imagination and fancy. There are humorous incidents, as when the realistically minded runs for the bright colors of the rainbow. *Ihm krabbeln Käfer in der Hand*. This shock between realism and the "shaping power of the imagination" is the greatest experience for him. I am always willing to entertain the simplest, naïvest questions. These have taught me, in turn, valuable lessons. All matters relating to technique are eagerly caught up, especially by the type of student that comes from the Engineering School. In technique we have that body of demonstrable fact, beyond which only the inspired teacher will lead his students. It is well, however, to remember that a thorough knowledge of technique becomes an invaluable help to even the inspired teacher. A lot of rubbish, half truth and superstition, about matter artistic would vanish if such books as Müller-Freienfels, *Psychologie der Kunst*, were more read and better known. Only one warning: the teacher must beware of becoming entangled in the meshes of the net of technique.

In conclusion: May I hope that my rather inadequate presentation of a large and difficult problem will nevertheless have touched upon points that will hearten the fellow-worker and make him joyous in the interpretation of masterpieces? Goethe has a line that runs so:

"Denn edlen Seelen *vor*zufühlen  
Ist wünschenswertester Beruf"

I should like to say to the teacher of Literature:

"Denn edlen Seelen *nach*zufühlen  
Ist wünschenswertester Beruf."

*University of Missouri*

---

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE CLUB<sup>1</sup>

---

By MARIELE SCHIRMER

---

THE purpose of a Modern Language Club, as I conceive it, is to combine the knowledge gained in the class-room with a spirit of camaraderie and informality, thus making the language

<sup>1</sup> A paper read before the Eighth Annual Convention of the Wisconsin Association of Modern Foreign Language Teachers, Madison, Wis., April, 29, 1921.